

The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF)

The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) is a federation in which the breeding companies, milk-recording organisations, cattle herd book societies and the main farmer organisations are shareholders.

ICBF is an approved body under Commission Decision 2006/427/EC to conduct performance recording testing, genetic evaluation and publication of evaluation results of bovine animals in Ireland.

ICBF's mission is to achieve the greatest possible genetic improvement in the national herd for the wider benefit of all cattle farmers, the dairy and beef industries and its member organisations by collecting, collating and distributing available information and data of practical and scientific interest and by promoting the exchange of all such information and data.

ICBF operates under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Prior to the formation of ICBF in 1997, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would have carried out the majority of the work envisaged for funding under the 2009-2013 Cattle Breeding Infrastructure programme.

ICBF received funding from the Department of Agriculture in 2000-2006 RDP programme period, which received Commission clearance. Funding was allocated to develop the necessary infrastructure for data collection, technical studies to ensure the most efficient use of data being collected, upgrading of recording/testing facilities, etc.

The 2009-2013 Cattle Breeding Infrastructure programme is a continuation of the 2008 Cattle Breeding Infrastructure programme, which was approved by the EU Commission on 14th January 2008 under **XA29/2008**.

Summary of 2009-2013 Cattle Breeding Infrastructure Programme

The Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF) will administer the Cattle Breeding Infrastructure Programme 2009-2013.

This programme aims to encourage the uptake of modern scientific breeding values by beef and dairy farmers, thus contributing to their long-term viability. This programme comprises a number of elements relating to testing, genetic evaluation and data collection and distribution of scientific information.

The genetic evaluation project includes researching, reviewing and developing enhancements to the beef and dairy genetic evaluation systems operating in Ireland, incorporating genomic data where appropriate, rollout of new beef evaluations, including advertising, publication of educational material, direct mail shots to farmers, and meetings with farmers and stakeholders in the industry with a view to improving farmer understanding of the new indices.

The Data Collection and Information Distribution element of this programme aims to develop and enhance computer systems, provide training and to support the rollout of beef and dairy genetic evaluation results for cattle.

Provision of support under Articles 15 (2)(d) and 15 (2)(e) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1857/06

An important function of ICBF in carrying out its duties is the regular consultation meetings with all stakeholders to explain the background to any changes or updates in the testing and genetic evaluation system.

When the genetic evaluation indices have been updated following consultation, they must be marketed which involves advertising, publications, and information meetings for the wider industry so that they can be explained in detail.

ICBF must adhere to the latest scientific principles when conducting testing and genetic evaluation and therefore must disseminate this knowledge to the industry through a variety of means so that it will be utilised at farm level. Support for these activities is as envisaged under Article 15(2)(d) and 15(2)(e) of Commission Regulation 1857/2006.

Provision of support under Article 16(1)(b) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1857/06

ICBF, as an approved body under Commission Decision 2006/427/EC, conducts tests on cattle in order to determine the genetic quality or yield of those livestock. Support for this activity is covered under the provisions of Article 16 (1)(b) of Commission Regulation 1857/2006.

In order to conduct these tests, an essential part of the genetic evaluation system is the collection of accurate reliable data, which is then analysed centrally through one central database. Funding is envisaged here for the updating and enhancement of the central ICBF cattle breeding database, and associated software systems to ensure that the most up-to-date testing systems are available.

The determination of the genetic quality of livestock involves the preparation of a suitable genetic index for both dairy and beef cattle, which allows the quality of any animal to be displayed in an easily understood format by all users. ICBF must continually research the genetic evaluation systems to take account of various factors, for example, increases in the price of inputs, changes in the price of milk and meat products. This ensures that the testing and genetic evaluations conducted by ICBF are kept as scientific and relevant as possible for end users, that is, farmers. Funding is envisaged therefore for researching, reviewing and enhancing the genetic evaluation systems operated by ICBF during 2009-13 which is compatible with Article 16 1(b) of Commission Regulation (EC) No 1857/2006.